



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff **Scott Smith** Chief Deputy

Home Security Surveys

During this holiday season, many of us look forward to Christmas parties, family get-togethers and the gift of giving. While many of us are focused on the blessings of the holidays, we forget to focus on protecting ourselves and our property. Even during this time of year when we are all celebrating the holidays, we need to take a little extra time to ensure we do not become victims.

Unfortunately there are those in the world who set out to deprive us of our personal property through burglaries, robberies and other forms of theft. Many of the break-ins that I have responded to during my career in law enforcement could have been prevented had simple suggested practices been followed. In fact, when we do catch up to the perpetrators, many times they admit that they only look for homes and vehicles that are left unlocked or are easy to gain entry to. They would rather spend more time on the act of stealing than trying to gain entry first. Many times I have heard the expression, "If they really want to get in, they will". That statement is true, but more often than not, they really don't want to spend time breaking in and would rather move on to an easier target.

So how can you protect yourself from becoming a victim? I suggest that you perform a survey of your home. The sheriff's office has developed a very easy to use document called the Home Security Handbook. It is located on our website under the Community Programs link. The home page for the sheriff's office is www.dodgecountysheriff.com.

I will take a moment to touch on a few of the highlights. First and foremost, the easiest way into your home is with a key. Ensure that you maintain proper key control. Having a key hidden is not always a good idea as thieves often times will look for those keys first. Ensure that you know who has keys to your home or garage. For example, do you know for sure that a prior owner didn't keep a key to your home? If you don't know for sure who has a key, replace the locks.

Ensure your property is well lit, especially points of entry or areas where a potential burglar could hide. New LED technology and motion activated lights can make this relatively inexpensive to operate and will deter individuals from targeting your home.

Proper landscaping is also important. You should keep your doorways, windows and porches clear of large shrubs or bushes that can again be hiding places for criminals to conceal themselves. Privacy and security fences are a good idea and will make sure that it is not only difficult to get in but will make removing large items a challenge as well.

Make sure that all the locks on your doors are in good working order. Secondly, make sure that you use the locks. Don't forget about your garages and vehicles as well. Many people think that when their car is parked at their home, it is safe, yet these are the vehicles most often broken into.

These are all areas that if properly maintained and secured, can significantly reduce your potential of loss as thieves will be less likely to target your home. I encourage you to download the handbook and go through your home making the improvements suggested. Many of them are inexpensive and require very little work. These simple steps can help to keep your home secure and very well may keep you from becoming a victim. Of course if you need assistance, contact the sheriff's office and we would be glad offer assistance to protect your home.

Have a blessed holiday season and thank you for helping me to keep Dodge County a safe place to live, work and visit.